A Review of *In Quest of Indian Folktales: Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube and William Crooke* by Sadhana Naithani, Hydrabad: Orient Black Swan Pvt. Ltd., 2006. 330p

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I am very delighted to review this revelatory book by Sadhana Naithani. The author is already known in the academic community for her previous work "*Folktales from Northern India By William Crooke and Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube*" (ABC-CLIO Classic Folk and Fairy Tales. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2002), in which she edited a collection of folktales published in Indian periodicals at the end of the nineteenth century. Naithani's new book, recently republished by Orient Black Swan, presents a collection of fairy tales of Northern India that were buried unpublished in English archives since the late nineteenth century. Both books have already been embraced by scholars with great enthusiasm, with the new book being a climactic continuation of Naithani's thought and work on post-colonialism. Moreover, this new publication of Indian folktales offers intellectual stimulation not only for colonialism versus post-colonialism discourse, but also for ethnographic writings in general.

Similar to her previous book, the new title, "In Quest of Indian Folktales", is followed by two names "Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube and William Crooke", challenging the reader to ask: Who are these two people, what is the relationship between them, and more important, what is their role in the mediation of Indian folktales? Naithani has devoted a significant portion of her book to investigating and explaining the collaboration between the prominent British colonizer William Crooke and the unknown indigenous colonized person Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube.

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In her preface, Naithani relives the surprises that her detective-like archival research at the Folklore Society in London revealed. She discovered unpublished manuscripts containing Indian folktales translated into English that belong officially to the well-known folklorist and British colonial administrator William Crooke. However, the manuscripts bore the signature of an unknown person, Pandit Chaube. In her book, Naithani masterfully unravels and solves this mysterious identity issue: Who signed the manuscripts and why were they in the British official's archive? In the process of dealing with these questions, she discovered that the Indian, Pandit Chaube, rendered hundreds of Indian folktales into English but "has remained anonymous and unacknowledged for one hundred years" (p. xiii). Naithani proposes for Chaube "a new identity and voice: that of an Indian folklore scholar in colonial India" (p. xiii). A majestic picture of William Crooke in his doctoral robe (p. 3), as well as that of the only element left by Chaube, his signature (p. 4), offer the opportunity to the readers to "meet" both protagonists of the book.

The book is structured in two parts. The first part, "The Quest", is subdivided into four chapters which deal with the biographies of the two men and their personal as well as professional relationship. These sections are not only enjoyable to read, but are also a very strong piece of academic work, which can steer scholarly discussion and provoke in-depth thinking. The second part, "Tales from the Manuscripts of Chaube and Crooke", constitutes the bulk of the book and presents 158 tales from Northern India for the first time. Naithani, an experienced editor of folktales, again proves herself to be a conscious and careful editor.

In the first chapter Naithani illustrates the biographies of the two men, Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube (late 1850s-1914) and William Crooke (1848-1923) with insightfulness and personal touch. Chaube originated from the village Gopalpur, Gorakhpur district and was educated in both the Indian and English traditions, attaining a Bachelor of Arts from Calcutta. He was a multilingual talent, who "was able to turn even newspapers headlines into English verses almost instantly" (p. 5). The British Crooke was an anthropologist at Trinity College in Dublin and served as a Civil Service officer in India from 1871 until 1896. Crooke fulfilled his anthropological interests during his service; for him "his administrative subjects were also his anthropological objects" (p. 6). Crooke and Chaube met in the early 1890s and had a very intense association for four years. Crooke used Chaube as his native informant for his anthropological inquiries. Chaube collected folktales from Northern India and translated them into English. He supplied these to Crooke who most likely intended to have them published. After they separated from each other both men continued their scholarly endeavors; Crooke as an eminent folklorist

in the Folklore Society in London, Chaube as an anonymous obsessive reader and writer who died impoverished and insane in his village.

Naithani reflects on the relationship of the two men based on a letter Chaube sent to Crooke in 1900, and she interprets their collaboration with her post-colonial eyes. According to her, Chaube "wanted to live and work not as a *babu*, or a soldier, or a reformist, or a pleader, or an early freedom fighter, but as a scholar –an Indian scholar– rooted in the contemporaneity of the traditional society and educated in the modern western system of knowledge" (p. 12). Naithani questions why Crooke, who "had needed and found not an assistant but an associate" (p. 17), never mentioned Chaube's name in his writings. Naithani rescues Chaube from anonymity and places him on a high scholarly level by claiming "Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube was tragically ahead of his times – he was proposing a counter to orientalism, an occidentalism. Did William Crooke also know that Chaube was not an ordinary associate? Is that he could not place him anywhere?" (p. 17).

The second chapter, "The Golden Manuscripts", is a golden analysis of the archival material. Naithani offers an excellent methodological survey of the collection and its construction with scrutiny to the smallest details. The transformation of oral stories into written texts is one of the main issues in folklore studies and this collection of Indian folklore faced the additional challenge of transformation into a foreign language. Naithani explores the complications of this double transfer upon the narratives and the narrators. Based on the few tangible clues ("visible elements") appearing on almost every manuscript including the narrators, the narratives, the comments, the signature, and the titles, Naithani learned that "these tales [were] either recorded or both narrated and recorded by teachers of village schools" (p. 21) and originated from various districts. She makes the important discovery that this material marks a new understanding of the genre folktale: Whereas previous collections of nineteenth century Indian tales meant to incorporate every oral narrative, this collection by Chaube and Crooke indicated a shift towards literary studies, "which ascertains the narrative's value by analyzing its 'type' and formal qualities" (p. 22).

Based on Chaube's notes on the manuscripts, Naithani raises questions about the possible changes he may have made to the texts in order to make them more appealing to a potential international readership. Thus, she touches upon issues in folkloristics regarding performance, collection, selection, and translation. The titles of the texts, which were added by William Crooke, allow Naithani to reflect on the intentions of the British folklorist. Based on her careful reading of his descriptive notes and titles, she suggests that "Crooke was on the way

to a kind of tale type index, such as the one later formulated by Aarne and Thompson. At another level, his intent to undertake a comparative study may not be ruled out" (p. 29). Crooke's intentions can be compared to the motivations behind nineteenth century folklore collections from other countries. For instance the first attempts to collect and publish folklore material in Greece were mostly initiated by foreign scholars who also intended to set up a tale type catalogue. The collection of Greek and Albanian folktales by Johann Georg von Hahn, the Austrian consul in Greece, was published on 1864 and comprises the first international tale type catalogue, a predecessor of Aarne and Thompson.[1] The first folklorists, even in countries with different colonial or non-colonial history than India, were captured by the idea of constructing and structuring folklore knowledge into comparative types.

Naithani argues that, "we need to read the history of colonial British scholarship of Indian folklore anew, with a special eye on the processes of collection and translation" (p. 38). The third chapter "Crooke, Chaube, and Colonial Folkloristics, 1868-1914" revisits the history of research and folklore in colonial India since the 19th century. In contrast with European traditions, Naithani believes that the images of India by colonial collectors "were usually unromantic" (p. 54). In her view, the Indian narrators were aware of the historical and social changes their society was undergoing and their motivation to narrate was "not a vague and romantic loss of tradition but the historical and cultural transition within a colonized society" (p. 48).

Naithani lets the silence be heard. She unearths the "missing discourse" (p. 51) that belongs to the silent native narrators. She ends the first section of the book with a chapter on "Post-colonial Conclusions" that summarizes her theses about the collaboration between a colonizer and a colonized person and her arguments about re-viewing the colonial perspective. Naithani deconstructs "the deconstruction of the orientalist construct" and she cries not for dichotomies, but for "multiple agencies in the production of knowledge" (p. 57). By critiquing social power structures and the construction of knowledge, Naithani's insight into the association between Crooke and Chaube is a pioneering work, since a similar colonial relationship was not previously known (p. 59).

The second part of the book consists of 158 stories divided into four categories according to their theme. As a faithful editor Naithani didn't change the order of the stories but published them as she found them in the archives, perhaps the way Pandit Chaube might have published them.

[1] See Grimm, Gerhard 1990: Hahn, Johann Georg von. *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*. Band 6. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, 376-378.

The first category of tales "Colors of Life", comprised of 87 stories, is the largest group of tales in the book. As their title implies these stories are depictions of "everyday lives, social practices and structures, questions and dilemmas, and matters of life and death" (p. 63). The second group of 16 narratives "So Wise Some Women are" is devoted to tales depicting women's nature and mind. Naithani believes that "coming from a team of male collectors, translators and narrators, this section is especially interesting" (p. 188). The 22 stories of the third group entitled "Magical Mind" "are stories of surreal landscapes where ... impossible feats can be achieved" (p. 222). Finally, the 33 stories of the fourth group "Corrective Measures" are "tales with an overt didactic intent of teaching the rule to the exceptional deviant or non-believer" (p. 282).

Naithani comments that recurrent topic in the collection is "the relationship between the kind and the pandit, the ruler and the scholar, the power to govern and the power to discern... the dilemmas in a relationship between the intellectual and the worldly powers" (p.33). Particularly interesting are Pandit Chaube's comments at the end of various tales, such as his comment on tale number 102: "One of the best —if not the best tale I have ever recorded or translated" (Crooke's title: The Trials of a Virtuous Woman, ATU712).

Naithani demonstrates her excellent editing ethos by meticulously explaining each of the small changes she made to the texts before publishing them (p. 27). The academic professionalism of the author is demonstrated at the end of the volume by the appendix with Aarne-Thompson Tale Type index numbers, the glossary of Indian terms within tales, the bibliography, and four indexes. By including an international type index, Naithani helps the reader to locate the published material within an international framework.

Naithani's book is an important contribution to folklore scholarship focusing on colonial and post-colonial discourses. This highly stimulating and engaging book will be of great interest to specialized scholars as well as general readers interested in folktales from Northern India.

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